

82-10123/1
9 Sept. 82

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

Executive Registry

82-10123/1

9 September 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO/LA
FROM: DCI
SUBJECT: Central America

We should talk about this.

William J. Casey

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International outlook

By Sol W. Sanders

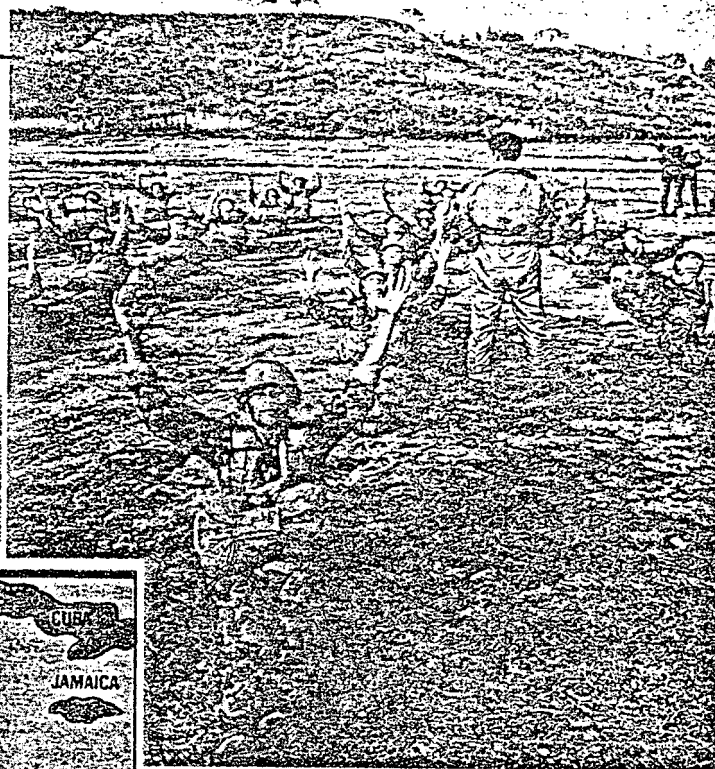
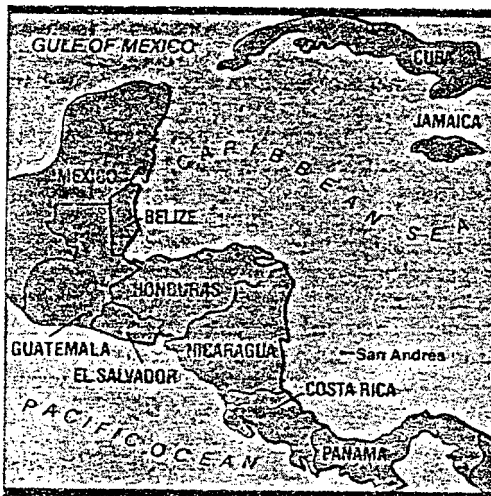
The Reagan Administration veers left in Central America

The Reagan Administration's Central American policy has zagged sharply to the left in anticipation of a major new escalation of violence in the region. In a speech delivered at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, Assistant Secretary of State for inter-American affairs Thomas O. Enders adroitly backtracked on previous positions. The Enders speech is being explained to hard-liners inside and outside the government as a "tactical" attempt to persuade critics, particularly of U.S. policy toward El Salvador, that the Administration can be reasonable. But in special State Dept. news briefings, the Enders speech was presented as a policy reversal reflecting the position of new Secretary of State George P. Shultz.

The policy turn comes at a critical time for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Internal opposition to the regime has increased substantially and is allied with a coalition formed from the remnants of the Somoza National Guard forces in neighboring Honduras, heavily reinforced with other enemies of the Sandinistas. The coalition, which can field 8,000 well-trained men, claims to have some 200 small units operating inside Nicaragua—and attacks by small units have taken place even in Managua, the capital. Meanwhile, a war of attrition is on between the Sandinista leadership and the Mesquit Indians who live along the Caribbean coast—across which passes the Sandinistas' lifeline to the Cubans.

A new level of violence. All this has produced an almost constant clash in recent weeks between Sandinista and anti-Sandinista forces on both sides of the Nicaragua-Honduras border. And Daniel Ortega, the leading radical member of the Sandinista junta, has threatened to cross the Honduran border "to take out [the exile army] with surgical precision." If that kind of engagement does come, it could force a formal "internationalization" on the anti-communist side by invoking the Central American Defense Treaty to match the alliance of communist forces with the Sandinistas. Or it could produce a call to invoke the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro calling on all American states—including the U.S.—to halt aggression.

The U.S. is already involved. Clandestine aid from the U.S. had been flowing to the Nicaraguan exiles—although, perhaps in line with Enders' speech and a new policy, the aid apparently was cut off in mid-August. Americans also have been associated with the famous Commander Zero (Eden Pastora), a former Sandinista leader who earlier this summer announced that the Nicaraguan revolution had been "betrayed" and that he was going into armed left-wing opposition. But Pastora, whose Mexican, Libyan, and possibly Cuban connections make him suspect to other Nicaraguan exiles, says he will fight the Honduras-based group, which he labels "Somozistas."



Honduran troops: Unable to stop Salvadoran guerrillas from using the country as a sanctuary.

In El Salvador, the situation for the U.S.-backed regime continues to deteriorate. Leftist guerrillas, unable to force a victorious military showdown with the government, are methodically destroying the economic infrastructure in an effort to demoralize the population. Honduran forces under military strongman General Gustavo Alvarez, who supported free and fair elections there earlier this summer, have back-

stopped Salvadoran government forces. They are trying to stop the use of Honduras as the "Cambodia" of the Salvadoran conflict. Honduras' relatively large size, sparse population, and weak armed forces make it difficult to halt the infiltration of weapons and men, providing a sanctuary for the Sandinista- and Cuba-backed Salvadoran guerrillas that cross back and forth into El Salvador.

The U.S. is extending military aid and training to the Honduran forces and improving the airport facilities at San Andrés, a Colombian island off Nicaragua. The Hondurans are also training marines for the new Guatemalan regime, which—while more acceptable to Washington than the previous military junta—is still under a U.S. embargo that forbids the training and delivery of weapons.

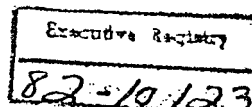
Massed vehicles. The question is whether these measures by the U.S. are adequate in the face of the continuing buildup of arms and forces in Nicaragua. For example, the Sandinistas reportedly have massed amphibious vehicles at Monkey Point, near the Costa Rican border opposite San Andrés. The Honduran air force, long considered that country's main defense against any Sandinista attack, may soon be outclassed by Nicaraguan pilots being trained on MiGs in communist countries. Other Nicaraguan recruits training on Cuba's Isle of Pines and in other communist countries for the past year are due back in strength this fall.

At the same time, the Sandinistas are getting training and direct participatory support on the ground from a wide range of communist and left-wing allies, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, East Germans, Vietnamese, North Koreans, and Bulgarians, plus a large Cuban contingent—

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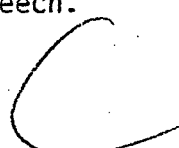
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I would like your comment on this
and a copy of the Enders speech.


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International outlook

By Sol W. Sanders

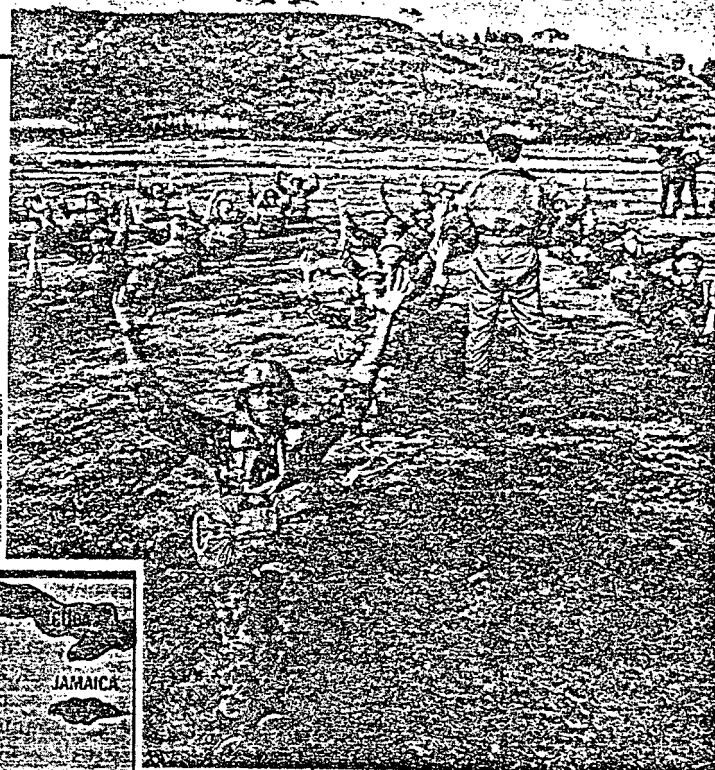
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